This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

The Status of the Claims

1-26. (Canceled).

27. (New) A method of operating a vehicle brace engagable adjacent to a vehicle's rear edge as material handling equipment traverses the rear edge while accessing the vehicle, the method comprising:

causing the vehicle brace to apply a reactive upward force adjacent to the vehicle's rear edge, to dampen downward movement of the vehicle's rear edge that would otherwise result from the applied weight of the material handling equipment.

28. (New) The method of claim 27, further comprising limiting the reactive upward force to a predetermined upper limit that is below a value at which the reactive upward force would cause damage to the structure of the vehicle.

29. (New) The method of claim 28, further comprising allowing the brace to yield for a reactive upward force that exceeds the predetermined upper limit.

30. (New) The method of claim 28, wherein the reactive upward force is created by preventing movement of the brace until the reactive upward force reaches the predetermined upper limit.

31. (New) The method of claim 28, wherein the reactive upward force minimizes downward movement of the vehicle's rear edge by being substantially equal to a downward force resulting from the weight of the material handling equipment until the reactive upward force reaches the predetermined upper limit.

32. (New) The method of claim 27, further comprising increasing the reactive upward force in response to an increase in a rate of descent of the vehicle's rear edge.

33. (New) The method of claim 32, wherein increasing the reactive upward force is carried out by forcing fluid through a flow restriction.

34. (New) The method of claim 27, wherein causing the vehicle brace to exert a reactive upward force is carried out by applying frictional drag.

35. (New) The method of claim 27, wherein causing the vehicle brace to exert a reactive upward force is carried out by storing energy in a spring.

36. (New) The method of claim 27, further comprising sensing when the vehicle is about to be loaded or unloaded.

37. (New) The method of claim 27, further comprising raising a vehicle restraining member to limit horizontal movement of the vehicle.

38. (New) A method of stabilizing a vehicle parked adjacent a loading dock as material handling equipment traverses a rear edge of the vehicle, the method comprising:

exerting a reactive force upward adjacent to the rear edge of the vehicle to oppose a downward force exerted by the vehicle and the material handling equipment as the material handling equipment traverses the rear edge, such that the vehicle's rear edge remains at a substantially fixed height when the downward force is below a predetermined magnitude.

39. (New) The method of claim 38, further comprising allowing the vehicle's rear edge to descend slowly when the downward force is above the predetermined magnitude.

40. (New) The method of claim 38, wherein the predetermined magnitude is a force magnitude below that which damage will occur to the vehicle.

41. (New) The method of claim 38, wherein exerting the reactive force is carried out by forcing a fluid through a flow restriction.

42. (New) The method of claim 38, wherein exerting the reactive force is carried out applying frictional drag.

43. (New) The method of claim 38, wherein exerting the reactive force is carried out by storing energy in a spring.

44. (New) The method of claim 38, further comprising sensing when the vehicle is about to be loaded or unloaded.

45. (New) The method of claim 38, further comprising raising a vehicle restraining member to limit horizontal movement of the vehicle.